

## Rock and a Hard Place by kinghairington

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**Summary:**

After being left at school by your brother, Steve Harrington gave you a ride home. Little did you know this would lead to more issues with Billy.

## Rock and a Hard Place

### Author's Note:

**A/N:** Request at end. This began as a short original idea that I had, but I included a request that I've had for a while and suddenly it was about 2,000 words longer. This is more of a friendship fic than anything, but I hope it's enjoyable. Comments are appreciated!

**Warnings:** hints/mentions of abuse, violence, and a little language

You were still getting used to Hawkins, but you had to admit that the high school wasn't so bad. Everyone had been nice the past couple weeks. It was freezing outside but the people were warm and friendly. A big plus was the library was quiet enough so you could get most of your homework done while Billy was at basketball practice.

With the thought of your brother, you gathered all of your books, picked up your bag and made your way out of the library and toward the gym.

The familiar sounds of shouting got louder as you opened a door leading into the gym. As usual, Billy was hard to miss. He was currently hovering over a brunette male laying on the basketball court. The guy was clearly in pain and it looked like Billy was reveling in it.

With a roll of her eyes, you called out his name.

"Billy!"

His head snapped up as he turned to you. With a smirk, he looked back down to the other guy and said a few words before walking to you.

"Hey."

"Already picking on someone?" You asked, watching the other boy

get up and jump back into the practice. He was able to make an impressive shot without Billy trying to kill him. The way he flicked his hair out of his face was magnetic to watch.

Dragging your eyes away from the unknown teenager, you looked at Billy.

“That was nothing,” he said with a shrug. Thankfully he hadn’t noticed your momentary attention on the other boy. If he noticed, you would definitely get an earful on the way home. If there was one thing your brother couldn’t stand, it was you and other boys being in the same room as each other.

A retort was on the tip of your tongue, but you held back. You were trying your best to turn over a new leaf with this move and provoking Billy wouldn’t help matters. Instead, you brushed it off.

“I’ll be in the library while you practice. Can you come get me when you’re done?”

Billy nodded. “Yeah, fine.”

“Don’t forget me.”

Backing up, you gave him a pointed look before walking back to the library.

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You stretched your arms above your head once you finished your science homework. It wasn’t your strong suit, but thankfully you were able to finish it up in what felt like a short amount of time.

Looking at the clock on the wall, you groaned at seeing how late it was. Over an hour had passed since you came back to the library after leaving the gym.

*If Billy left me, I’ll kill him,* you thought to yourself.

You rushed outside nearly dropping your books and bag. In your haste, you didn’t even take the time to put your books into your bag, so you pushed the front doors open with your back. Spinning around, you stopped in your tracks. The parking lot was empty save

for a couple of cars, but none of them were Billy's Camaro.

"Dammit, Billy," you muttered to yourself, placing your things on the ground so you could put it all in your bag.

You were going to have to walk home. You weren't sure exactly how to get there from the school, but you thought you would be able to figure it out by going the way Billy brought you and Max to and from school. Retracing your steps. If you were still in California, this wouldn't be a problem. You knew your way almost anywhere there and it wasn't cold. The temperature in Indiana, though, was beginning to drop as it got later and you could have cursed yourself for not wearing anything heavier than your sweater.

As you began your trek to the road, you rubbed your hands together and heaved a loud sigh. So much for trying to enjoy this new chapter in your life. You could kill Billy for leaving you in the middle of a new town in the middle of fall.

Somehow you hadn't thought about finding a payphone until you were just about to step onto the road, and as you turned around to go back to the school, you were met with the chest of the guy from the gym.

Falling backward, the boy caught your wrist and helped you to stand back up. He immediately dropped your arm and your opposite hand came up to rub where his hand had been. There was already a bruise there and you couldn't even hide the wince as you touched the tender skin.

His eyes followed your movements.

"Did I hurt you?" He asked, voice full of concern.

You dropped your hand and shook your head quickly.

"No, it's fine."

"Are you sure? I didn't mean to hurt you."

You wished he would stop talking.

The only thing you could think to do was repeat yourself.

“No, it’s fine.”

He was convinced, you could tell that much from the way his eyes fell to your arm. But when his eyes met yours again, he dropped the topic. Instead, he asked, “Do you need a ride? I saw you talking to Billy earlier and he’s gone.”

“Yeah, I gathered that much when I didn’t see his car.” Focusing on his words, you shook your head again. “I was actually looking for a payphone. I could call my dad or step-mom.”

Really, you hated to call your dad when he was at work, but if you could catch Susan before he made it home, you could possibly get home without having to bother him. You would love to take the ride from this guy, it would be a lot easier than calling and waiting longer, but there were a few issues with that. One, you didn’t know him. For all you knew, he was just trying to get laid. Two, Billy. He would have a fit if you were dropped off by a guy, especially someone he seemed to already have an issue with.

“Do you know where a payphone is?” You asked, glancing around the parking lot.

“There’s one around there,” he said while pointing you in the right direction. “But it’s not a big deal. It’s - it’s almost dark.”

You almost laughed, but when you looked at him, his face was completely serious. He had a point. Getting home late would almost be worse than not showing up at all.

Shifting your bag on your shoulder, you sighed in defeat.

“I don’t want to be a bother.” But, he was right, you did need a ride home.

“It’s not a problem,” he replied, swinging his keys around his fingers. “I don’t have anywhere to be.” His voice came out dripping with bitterness. A part of you wanted to know his story but you already had your own.

Without another word, he turned and started the walk to his car. It was a nice one, too. He was a rich boy by the look of things. He unlocked the passenger door after getting in and you opened it before leaning down to look at him.

“Hey, if you’re gonna give me a ride home, I should probably know your name.”

With a laugh, he nodded.

“My name’s Steve,” he said, smile widening as he spoke.”Steve Harrington.”

He was still a stranger, but you got into the car anyway. You didn’t have much of a choice at that point. Either way, you were going to have to deal with your father and brother’s anger; might as well make it exciting.

“And you are?” He questioned. He started the ignition as he waited for your answer.

“You can call me Cali if you want. A couple people here already do.”

“Why?” He asked, confusion lacing his words.

“I’m from California.”

It took a few seconds for your words to register with Steve.

“Oh. That’s why you were talking to Billy Hargrove? You’re both from California?”

“Well, yeah, we are, but that’s not why I was talking to him.” You paused and glanced at his face as he drove. You wondered how long it would take him to work it out on his own. How many people in Hawkins could be from California, anyway? “He’s my brother.”

Steve’s entire demeanor changed for a moment, a look that was a cross between panic and concern flashing over his features.

“Is he always so -” Steve stopped.

“Is he always an asshole?” You said, eyes still on him. He relaxed at your words. “Most of the time. He hasn’t always been like that, but things changed.”

For a moment, you thought about your mother and how leaving California along with your father’s treatment of you both changed your brother’s attitude. You couldn’t say it hadn’t made you more abrasive, but Billy took it all harder.

Steve’s voice snapped you out of your thoughts.

“So, he forgot you at school?”

You let out a bitter laugh.

“Yeah. After I told him not to.” Shaking your head, you sighed. “I just hope my sister got home okay. She goes to the middle school, but she’s better at being where he says when he says to be there.”

You didn’t know why you were telling this guy about your family, but he sent you an understanding nod that made you wonder again what his deal was. Rich, attractive, and damaged? Just your luck.

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The rest of the ride consisted of a surprisingly comfortable conversation with Steve. He asked a few questions about California and how it compared to Hawkins and gave you a couple of suggestions of the coolest places to hang out in town - it turned out, other than a movie theatre and an arcade, there wasn’t much to do for teenagers. He also warned you against hanging out with the kids your brother was already making friends with. He didn’t have to say it for you to figure out that the boy had a bad history with them. By the time you made it home, you felt like you had a decent handle on the town.

Before Steve could even put the car into park, your eyes searched the driveway for any sight of your dad’s car. Billy’s car was home, but your dad was thankfully nowhere to be found.

“Thanks for the ride, Steve,” you said hastily, unbuckling yourself and grabbing the door handle. “I’ll see you at school.”

Jumping out, you grabbed your bag and waved at him, sending him the biggest smile you could muster. You got lucky, but you needed to get into the house before your dad showed up.

"It's cool," he said, smiling a smile you were sure had made other girls weak in the knees. Your adrenaline was already building too high to feel the effect of it. "Let me know if you need a ride some other time."

"Sure." You nodded.

It was probably rude how fast you ran up to the front door, opening the door and heaving a sigh of relief once it was closed behind you. Closing your eyes, you tilted your head back until it thumped gently against the wood.

"Was that fucking Harrington?" Billy asked. You heard his teeth grinding as he spoke, setting you on high alert. "We just got here and you're already putting out for pretty boys like that?"

You slowly opened your eyes and pushed yourself off the door, shaking your head as irritation crept up at Billy's temper.

"No, it's not like that. You forgot me and he was the only person around. It was either that or walk home." You gestured around the living room. "And dad's not home yet, so I think that was a pretty good decision."

Billy faltered. He knew you were right, you could see it in his eyes, but he'd never admit it.

"He's just trying to get laid." Meeting his eyes, you rolled yours. You hated that the two of you were so similar, but you wouldn't let him know that was your first thought, too.

"Don't get mad because some people here are nice. He gave me a ride home because it was almost dark, and that's it."

Again, you wanted to remind him that he had forgotten you, but before either of you could say anything, the door opened and in walked your father.



You took a deep breath and walked into your room, locking the door behind you. It would be simple to stay there until Susan called you for dinner, one of the few times that the family was usually able to sit without too many arguments or insults thrown around, but you were sure that Billy's interrogation was just beginning.

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The weekend went by uneventfully until Billy came home from looking for Max with a busted lip and a hangover unlike any that you had ever seen from him. He wouldn't tell you who he'd fought with, but he assured you that the other guy was worse off. You weren't sure if that was a good thing. There was also a new tension between him and Max, which had you checking in on the redhead in concern. She just smirked and said that neither of you had to worry about Billy anymore. Even though you were several years older than her, you didn't want to question it if it kept Billy from taunting her. Her confidence had flown through the roof and it was nice to see someone able to be happy in the Hargrove-Mayfield household.

Monday at school you found out who Billy's fight was with when you saw Steve get out of his car sporting an array of much worse bruises on his face.

Eyes attached to Steve, you slowly climbed out of Billy's Camaro. Despite the number of bruises you'd seen and experienced in the last couple of years, the dark purple and yellowing abrasions on Steve's skin were frightening. Had Billy done this?

Steve's eyes met yours across the parking lot and you quickly turned to Billy, asking, "What happened?"

"Doesn't matter," Billy muttered, throwing his cigarette butt onto the ground and shouldering past you. Before he could get too far, you grabbed his wrist and pulled him with all your might so he was facing you.

"Why did you do this?" You demanded. Your eyes flicked back up to see Steve still watching intently. "It's not because he brought me home, is it? Because I don't need you doing this to keep a boy away from me."

For all you knew, Steve didn't even want to be around you - all he did was bring you home one day - but the thought that Billy could do something like this to someone sent an angry shiver through your body.

"Like I said, it doesn't matter," Billy repeated his words with a tug of his arm to free himself from your hold, immediately gripping onto your shoulder. Instinctively, you tilted your head back to look him in the eyes. His eyes were focused in on your face with a fierce stare, his nostrils flaring, and his breathing harsh. At that moment he reminded you of your father.

"Let go of me," you gritted out. His hand tightened on your shoulder and you bit down on your lower lip to keep yourself from crying out. Billy had learned from the best and you knew if you showed him how much he was hurting or scaring you, he would only get worse. Never in your life had you been scared of your brother in this way. You shook your head at him. "You're better than this. Let go of me now."

Concern flickered across his face but it was gone in the blink of his eyes. He leaned into your ear. "Stay the fuck away from Harrington, got it?"

You didn't know what the problem was with Steve, but you knew that it wouldn't be smart to ask Billy at that point. So you just nodded. Billy took a step back but kept his hand on your shoulder.

His grip loosened suddenly.

"Leave her alone," Steve spoke up from behind him. When you lifted your head to the sound, you noticed that he had his hand on Billy's shoulder in a similar fashion as Billy's had been on yours. Billy's hands were clenching at his sides and you knew you had to do something before he turned and swung at Steve's already injured face.

Billy took a deep breath, maneuvered his body away from you and toward Steve, and glared.

"I'll tell you what I told her," Billy started. Steve dropped his hand and moved his eyes to you long enough to assess your features. For

what, you didn't know. "Harrington, look at me, not her. Stay away from my sister."

This time, you were the one who spoke up. You had no clue what Billy's issue was with Steve or even why the two fought, but you wouldn't let him dictate who you could be friends with.

"Billy, just leave us alone," you said with a sigh. "I don't know why you're acting like this, but - but go away."

When Billy's attention returned to you, his eyes held a hurt that you hadn't seen in years. You had argued a lot recently, but there was an unspoken promise to each other to never do what you were doing. With the way he had been acting lately, it was time to give yourself some space away from him.

Letting a breath out of his nose, Billy stalked away and you watched in apprehension as he got back into his car and sped off. When he was out of sight you let out a breath of your own before looking at Steve.

"You didn't have to get him away from me," you said.

"I don't think I did." Steve smiled crookedly, bringing a hand up to the back of his neck. "You really stood your ground."

You shrugged and put your bag on your shoulder, hooking a thumb under the strap so it didn't touch the sore spot where Billy's hand had been.

"Sometimes he's a jerk." Stepping closer your eyes roamed his face. "You look like he tried to kill you." These last words came out of your mouth in a sad voice. You hated to see Billy going down this path and you weren't sure how to get him back.

"I thought he was going to," Steve admitted. "He can be scary. Are you okay?"

You nodded. "I'll be okay. He'll just ignore me for a few days."

Steve thought this over for a few seconds before speaking.

“I know he said for us to stay away from each other, but he’s not here right now.”

“I don’t care what Billy said.”

You began to walk to the front doors and turned to Steve when he followed.

“Can I give you a ride home after school?”

“As long you promise not to forget me.” Sending him a small smile, you asked, “Can you introduce me to your friends, too?”

Steve laughed and nodded his head. “Yeah, they’re pretty cool. I think you’ll fit in.”

Your adjustment to Hawkins wasn’t complete, but at least the people were nice.

#### **Author’s Note:**

**Request:** hi! do you think you might like to write a steve/reader where steve protects the reader from billy? like he gets to handsy with her at a party or he just scares her? i just really love protective and comforting steve. love your work!